

WE CLAIM:

1. A computer-implemented method of enabling a user of a processor system to purchase products for use with a component of the processor system, where the component may be any one of plural types, the method comprising steps of:
determining the particular type of the component without input from the user;
informing a remote server system via a communications network of the particular type of component; and
identifying one or more vendors offering to sell products compatible for use with the particular type of component.

2. The method of claim 1, where the steps of determining, informing and identifying are performed in response to a single action by the user.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising displaying a list of the one or more identified vendors to the user.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising steps of:
selecting a vendor from the one or more identified vendors without input from the user; and
establishing communications via the communications network between the processor system and a second remote server system associated with the selected vendor.

5. The method of claim 1, where the step of identifying is performed by the remote server system.

6. The method of claim 5, where the step of identifying includes searching a database system containing information regarding a plurality of vendors and the products offered for sale by each of the plural vendors.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising identifying which of plural products are compatible for use with the particular type of component.

8. The method of claim 7, where the step of identifying compatible products and the step of identifying one or more vendors are performed by the remote server system.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising informing a second remote server system of one or more of the compatible products via the communications network, where the second remote server system is associated with at least one of the identified vendors.

10. The method of claim 1, where the component is a printer.

11. The method of claim 10, where the products include an ink cartridge.

12. The method of claim 10, where the products include printer media.

13. A system configured to enable a user of a processor system to locate a vendor selling products for use with a component of the processor system, where the component may be any one of plural types, the system comprising:

software executable by the processor system to determine a particular type of the component without input from the user, and to transmit a purchase request specifying the particular type of the component via a communications network;

a server system configured to receive the purchase request from the processor system via the communications network, and to identify one or more vendors offering to sell products compatible for use with the particular type of the component.

14. The system of claim 13, where the server system is configured to transmit a list of the one or more vendors to the processor system for presentation to the user via a user interface.

15. The system of claim 14, where the user interface is configured to allow the user to select a vendor from the list, and where the server system is configured to forward the purchase request to the selected vendor via the communications network.

16. The system of claim 14, where the user interface is an Internet web page.

17. The system of claim 13, where the server system is configured to select a vendor from the one or more vendors, and to forward the purchase request to the selected vendor.

18. The system of claim 13, further comprising a vendor database system listing a plurality of vendors and the products offered for sale by each vendor, and where the server system is configured to access the vendor database system to identify the one or more vendors.

19. The system of claim 13, further comprising a product information database listing a plurality of types of components and the products compatible for use with each component, and where the server system is configured to access the product information database to identify which products are compatible for use with the particular type of the component.

20. The system of claim 19, where the server system is configured to forward the purchase request and the identity of the compatible products to at least one of the one or more vendors.

21. A computer-implemented method of enabling a user of a processor system to purchase products for use with a peripheral device of the processor system, where the peripheral device is one of plural types, the method comprising:

in response to a single action by the user, performing steps of

determining the particular type of the peripheral device,

informing a remote server system of the particular type of the peripheral device via a communications network,

identifying one or more products that are compatible for use with the particular type of the peripheral device, and

transmitting a purchase invitation to the processor system via the communications network, where the purchase invitation specifies at least one of the compatible products.

22. The method of claim 21, where the peripheral device is a printer.

23. The method of claim 22, where the compatible products are ink cartridges.

24. The method of claim 23, further comprising steps of
detecting a low-ink status in the printer; and
presenting a user-interface command element to the user in response to the low-ink

5 status;

where the single action by the user is actuation of the user-interface command
element.

25. The method of claim 22, further comprising presenting a user-interface
10 command element to the user, and where the single action by the user is actuation of the
user-interface command element.

26. The method of claim 25, further comprising receiving a print command from
the user, and where the step of presenting is performed in response to the print command.

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27. The method of claim 25, where the user-interface command element is
presented to the user in an Internet web page.

28. The method of claim 27, where the Internet web page is transmitted to the
20 processor system via the communications network from a second remote server system.

29. The method of claim 21, where the purchase invitation is in the form of an
Internet web page offering the at least one compatible product for sale.

25 30. The method of claim 21, where the step of identifying is performed by the
remote server system.

31. The method of claim 21, where the step of transmitting is performed by a
second remote server system associated with a product vendor.

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32. The method of claim 31, where the step of identifying is performed by the
remote server system, and further comprising informing the second remote server of the
compatible products.

33. The method of claim 21, where the step of determining is performed by the processor system.